

Section VI

When you are finished with this section, you will be able to:

Describe how medications affect different systems in the body

List different medication categories

Describe the type of information needed for each medication in order to administer the medication safely

The Cardiovascular System

The **cardiovascular system** and the **circulatory system** (the heart and the blood vessels) work by pumping blood, oxygen, nutrients and hormones through the blood vessels to the cells and all of the organs in the body.

Some heart and blood vessel problems can cause problems with other body systems or organs (for example, hypertension or high blood pressure can cause a person to have a stroke), and many heart problems can be treated or prevented by having a healthy lifestyle.

This means that by helping individuals to have a healthy diet, keep a good weight (not overweight), exercise and not to smoke can treat or prevent life-threatening heart problems. Helping individuals to take medications that treat cardiovascular problems and to manage and report side effects is critical.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATONS
Meds used to treat cardiovascular conditions				
Anti-Angina	Anti-angina meds help to open up the blood vessels and are used to increase blood supply to the heart	1. Nitroglycerin is sometimes taken sublingually (under the tongue) and may also be given orally and topically 2. Nifedipine	1. Flushed face Headache Low blood pressure 2. Flushed face Headache Low blood pressure	People who take medications for angina or to lower blood pressure need to make sure that they do not stand up quickly or change from a lying to a sitting position quickly, because this can worsen low blood pressure and cause the person to feel dizzy, "pass out" or fall down. They should take a minute and move their body around or wiggle their toes before sitting or standing up.
Anti-Arrhythmia -	Antiarrhythmics help the heart beat in a normal rhythm	1. Verapamil 2. Atenolol 3. Digoxin (see below)	These medications have many side effects in common: Low blood pressure Tiredness Cold hands or feet Spasms in the lung Impotence	These medications can also result in decreased blood pressure and you should follow the directions noted above about changing position. Do not stop taking these medications without a specific doctor's order. It can be very harmful to stop taking these medications abruptly (without gradually decreasing them).
Congestive Heart Failure	Digoxin lowers the heart rate and regulates the beat. Diuretics (also called fluid pills) help to drain fluid from the body.	1. Digoxin 2. Hydrodiuril (hydrochlorithiazide) 3. Lasix (furosemide)	1. Digitalis toxicity is a serious adverse effect and the signs include: Decreased eating, decreased appetite Sick to stomach Diarrhea Throwing up, confusion and feeling "down" 2&3. Diuretics have some side effects in common: Muscle cramps Weakness Dizziness Dry mouth Confusion Dry mouth, thirst	1. Because digoxin works by slowing down the heart rate, check the individual's pulse before every dosage is given. If the pulse rate is low (usually under 55 -60 beats per minute), then a nurse or physician should be contacted to see if the medication should be given on that day. Life-threatening toxicity can develop when taking digitalis. This is why it is critical to report all side effects to the nurse or doctor. 2&3. Give these medications in the morning along with a food or drink that is high in potassium such as a glass of orange juice or a banana. Some people take an additional medication such as a potassium supplement in order to prevent low potassium levels. Blood levels for medication and potassium levels will be monitored.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Lipid Lowering	Lower fat levels	Lopid (lipid-lowering) Mevacor (lipid-lowering)	Stomach pain or stomach cramping	Treatment: low fat diet, exercise and medications. Lipid lowering meds are usually given before meals or with the morning or evening meal.
Anti-coagulants	Anticoagulants: Medication that is used to prevent or decrease blood clot formation	Coumadin Ecotrin Aspirin (prevent blood clots)	Rash	Report bruising, nose bleeds to the health care provider immediately. Use an electric razor for shaving to avoid cuts, increased bleeding. Aspirin is given with food to prevent ulcers. People who take Coumadin require blood tests on a regular basis and must be watched for bruising or increased bleeding. Use a soft toothbrush or electric razor to prevent bleeding.
Anti-hypertensives	Work by lowering blood pressure. Some work by making the blood vessels relax and opening the blood vessels. Some decrease the force of the heartbeat. Others, such as diuretics (see above) lower the amount of fluid in the body; this decreases the force that the heart has to pump against.	Nifedipine Captopril	Light-headedness Skin flushing Swollen feet Constipation Light-headedness Dry cough Muscle cramps	All of the medications used to treat high blood pressure can cause low blood pressure. Signs of low blood pressure are feeling "light headed", dizzy or drowsy. Depending on the specific medication, there are other, more specific side effects. Never stop blood pressure medications abruptly. Grapefruit can affect the effect of some of these medications and should be avoided.

The Immune System

The **immune system** is the body's "defense system". It helps protect the body against infection and some cancers. The immune system sets up "barriers" within the body to protect it. If the body's defense system breaks down or is unable to "fight" the infection, the person may need an antibiotic.

Antibiotics are medications that are used to treat infections that are caused by bacteria. They work by either killing the bacteria or by preventing the bacteria from multiplying. There are many different groups of antibiotics and some antibiotics will work on many different types of infections. Others work only on certain types of bacteria so it is important to understand that "one size does not fit all" when giving antibiotics.

In this category of medications, there are also medications that treat infections caused by fungus (anti-fungals) or viruses (anti-viral). When you are giving a medication to treat an infection, you need to know what type of medication the infection is supposed to be treating.

The immune system is also responsible for allergies and allergic reactions. Anti-allergy medications are used to treat many different types of allergic reactions, including hay fever, nasal congestion caused by allergies, and eczema, an itchy, red skin rash.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Meds used to Treat Infections			Antibiotics are known for causing allergic reactions in some people. Any signs of allergic reaction such as rash, hives or trouble must be reported immediately.	All antibiotics should be taken for as long as they are prescribed, and continued even after the person starts feeling better. Sometimes people stop taking an antibiotic after a couple of days because they are feeling better. The problem is that the infection is not completely cured and can come back if the whole prescription is not taken.
Sulfonamides (Also called Sulfa Meds)	Treat bladder and urinary tract infections and some blood (systemic) infections	Bactrim	Nausea Throwing up Diarrhea Skin problems/rash	Must keep up a good fluid intake: one way to do this is to give the medication with a full glass of water and drink water throughout the day Avoid exposure to the sun and use sunscreen Take with full glass of water on an empty stomach
Penicillins	Treat respiratory infections, ear infections, skin infections, blood (systemic) infections and some urinary infections	Ampicillin Amoxicillin Penicillin	Nausea Diarrhea Stomach Upset	Some of these medications are best taken on an empty stomach and others should be taken with food to help decrease the stomach upset that the medication can cause. You will need to check with the pharmacist to see what is best for each specific medication.
Antifungals	Treat fungal infections of the skin, vagina, mouth, toenails	Diflucan Sporanox Nizoral Lamisil	Nausea Nausea and vomiting Headache, allergic reactions	Sporanox should be taken with food to make sure that it is absorbed by the body (except for the oral solution/liquid). Take Nizoral with food if nausea is a problem. It may take a long time (up to six months) for some types of fungal infections to be fully treated. Keep taking the medication until your healthcare provider says to stop. May take up to 10 weeks for Lamisil to cure toenail fungus Lamisil cannot be given to people who have liver problems.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATONS
Antivirals	Treat viral infections such as herpes, HIV	Zovirax Combivir	Tiredness, headache, confusion Nausea, throwing up Headache, tiredness, dizziness, nausea, throwing up, decreased appetite, muscle pain, cough, fever	Zovirax helps to manage herpes but does not cure it. A person who has herpes can still spread it even when they are taking zovirax. As soon as herpes sore is detected, the treatment should start: the sooner the better. Combivir does not cure HIV infection. A person with HIV can still spread the disease even when they are taking combivir. May be taken with or without food. All side effects or adverse affects must be reported immediately. Monitoring of blood tests is necessary while taking this medication.
Antihistamines	Most commonly used to treat hay fever, skin rashes caused by allergies and insect bites	Benadryl	Tiredness, sleepiness, dizziness, being uncoordinated, upset stomach, dry mouth, nausea, stomach upset, thick sputum	Should be taken with food or milk to decrease stomach upset. Benadryl can make a person tired and confused: they should avoid alcohol and activities that require alertness. Can cause problems with the sun: avoid sunlight and use sunscreen.
Corticosteroids	Steroids decrease inflammation that is caused by allergies and may also be used in skin creams to treat eczema	Prednisone	Hard time sleeping, hyperactivity, severe stomach upset and stomach ulcers	Do not stop taking Prednisone quickly: it must be phased out over time. Must be taken with food or milk. With long term use can cause swelling and weight gain: must notify health care provider if sudden weight gain or swelling happens. People taking Prednisone may not show usual signs of infection. They should avoid contact with people with infections.
Other: Epinephrine	Epinephrine is used to treat life-threatening allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis. It works by reversing swelling of the throat and the closing off of the airways.	Epi-pen An epi-pen is a pre-filled injection device that works immediately to reverse an allergic reaction.	Nervousness, shakiness, headache, tiredness, nausea, throwing up	If a person has a known history of allergic reactions to a food, medication or insect sting, an Epi-pen must be available to the person at all times. A severe allergic reaction is sometimes called an "anaphylactic reaction" or "anaphylaxis". Signs of anaphylaxis include: sudden nervous feeling, swollen face, lips, tongue, and hard time breathing and wheezing. Sometimes a red itchy rash, hives or flushing is also present. If a person shows any of these symptoms, call 911 immediately . If the individual has an order and protocol for Epi-pen, give it and make sure that someone has also called 911. Even though an Epi-pen will help, more treatment is needed on an immediate basis.

The Respiratory System

The respiratory system works along with other systems to bring oxygen to all of the cells in the body and to remove carbon dioxide (recycled oxygen) from the cells. This happens through breathing in and out. The circulatory system helps the respiratory system move oxygen and carbon dioxide through the body.

The respiratory system is often talked about in two parts, the upper respiratory system and the lower respiratory system.

The upper respiratory system is made up of the nose and sinuses, the throat and the trachea, which is often called the "windpipe".

The lower respiratory system is made up of the lungs.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATONS
Meds used to treat respiratory conditions				
Bronchodilators	Asthma: these medications relax and widen the airways to make breathing easier	Albuterol	Nervousness, hyperactivity, restlessness, hard time sleeping, heart "fluttering", nausea, throwing up, dizziness, high heart rate	Sometimes given by inhaler and sometimes given in pills.
Corticosteroids	Asthma: these medications prevent or decrease swelling in the airways	Prednisone	Hard time sleeping, hyperactivity, severe stomach upset and stomach ulcers	Do not stop taking Prednisone quickly - it must be phased out. Must be taken with food or milk. Must notify health care provider if weight gain or swelling happens. People taking Prednisone may not show usual signs of infection - avoid contact with people with infections.
Anti-allergy medications	Asthma: these medications help to treat asthma by preventing allergic responses	Claritin	Tiredness, dry mouth	Taken once daily. Avoid exposure to the sun and use sunscreen.
Decongestants	Treat stuffed up nose and sinus congestion	Sudafed	Nervousness, hyperactivity, heartbeat "flutters", restlessness	Can interact with other medications, especially heart and high blood pressure medications and cause severe problems. Must not be used for more than one week without talking with the health care provider. Do not take within two hours of bedtime.
Corticosteroids	Treat chronic obstructive lung disease (often caused by smoking) by decreasing the swelling and inflammation in the lungs	Prednisone	Hard time sleeping, hyperactivity, severe stomach upset and stomach ulcers	Do not stop taking Prednisone quickly: it must be phased out over time. Must be taken with food or milk. With long term use can cause swelling and weight gain: must notify health care provider if sudden weight gain or swelling happens. People taking Prednisone may not show usual signs of infection. They should avoid contact with people with infections.

The Nervous System

The **nervous system** is made up of the brain and the spinal cord. The brain and the spinal cord are connected to many other parts of the body by nerves. When the nervous system is damaged either by injury or disease, medications may be needed to treat seizures and other nervous system diseases such as Parkinson's Disease.

Individuals with developmental disabilities have a higher likelihood of having a **seizure** disorder than people who do not have a developmental disability. Medications used to treat seizures are called anticonvulsants.

Pain is connected to the nervous system. When the body is damaged, the nerves send a pain message to the brain. Medications used to treat pain are also called analgesics.

Sleeping problems are related to the nervous system. Sleeping medications work on the brain to cause tiredness and are also called hypnotics.

Mental health problems are related to the nervous system. There are many different medications that work to treat mental health problems.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATONS
Meds used to Treat Pain (Analgesics): Some of the medications used to treat pain are Narcotics (controlled drugs). Others are not.				
Non-Narcotic Analgesics	Used to treat mild pain	Tylenol (Acetaminaphan)	Minimal side effects	People who have liver problems should not take Tylenol. Long-term use of Tylenol can cause liver problems. Should not be taken with alcohol because this can cause additional liver problems. Many over-the-counter combination medications contain Tylenol. Always check the contents of over-the-counter medications before giving them with Tylenol.
Narcotic Analgesics (controlled drugs)	Used to treat mild to moderate pain and to treat severe pain	1. Codeine 2. Morphine	1. Tiredness, confusion, constipation, sweating 2. Tiredness, confusion, dizziness, nightmares, nausea, throwing up, constipation. Can also cause dependence	1. Can cause confusion, so cannot be taken before driving, doing things that require concentration. Should not be taken with alcohol. Can be taken with food or milk to lessen stomach upset. Codeine is a controlled drug and it must be counted daily. 2. Morphine works best for severe pain when it is given "around-the clock". Hold off on giving the medication and call the nurse or pharmacist if the person has become confused or so tired that they are having difficulty waking up. Can cause confusion, so cannot be taken before driving or doing things that require concentration. Should not be taken with alcohol. Constipation can be severe and may require treatment with laxatives. Morphine can cause breathing to slow down. If breathing rate is less than 12-14 breaths in a minute, hold the medication and notify the nurse or doctor. Morphine is a controlled drug and it must be counted daily.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Meds used to treat seizures (anti-convulsants.) Different anti-convulsants are used to treat different types of seizures.		There are many different anti-convulsants.		
	Used for generalized seizures and partial seizures	Tegretol Carbamazepine	Dizziness, sleepiness, unsteady walking, nausea, throwing up	Must report nausea and throwing up to the health care provider immediately: can be a sign of toxicity. Take with food to decrease stomach upset. Keep tablets in the original container, tightly closed. Call healthcare provider immediately if mouth sores, sore throat and fever happen or if increased bruising or bleeding are a problem. Eye exams are needed when taking Tegretol. Blood tests are needed to check for med levels and to monitor for anemia.
	Used for generalized seizures and complex partial seizures	Dilantin Phenytoin	Unsteady walking, slurred speech, confusion, double vision, bleeding and swollen gums, nausea, throwing up	Give with or just after meals to decrease stomach upset. Report rash immediately. Do not stop taking this med suddenly or seizures can happen. Blood tests are needed to check for blood levels and to monitor for anemia. Extra special care of teeth and gums is needed to prevent gum problems and tooth decay.
	Used for mixed seizure types and complex absence seizures	Depakote Valproic Acid	Sleepiness, double vision, nausea, throwing up, diarrhea, liver problems	Give with food or milk to decrease stomach upset. Do not chew or crush capsules: the coating is there to prevent mouth and throat sores. Do not mix syrup with carbonated drinks because this can increase mouth irritation and sores. Do not stop taking this medication suddenly. Blood tests are needed to check for blood levels.
	Used for partial seizures	Topamax	Unsteady walking, confusion, bad memory, dizziness, nervousness, tingling in hands or feet, tiredness, slowing down, speech problems, shakiness, double vision	Must drink lots of fluids to prevent crystals in the kidneys. Can decrease the effect of birth control pills. Do not crush or chew capsules: their taste is very bitter. Can be taken with or without food. Topamax is different from many of the other seizure medications because blood tests are <i>not</i> needed to monitor blood levels.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Meds used to treat Mental Health Problems				
Antianxiety medications	Help to decrease nervousness and fear	Ativan Lorazepam	Tiredness, drowsiness	Ativan is a controlled drug: must follow guidelines for accounting for controlled drugs. Can cause confusion, so avoid activities that require attention or alertness. Should not stop taking this medication suddenly if it has been taken for a long time: decrease and stop gradually. Can cause dependence. Do not take with alcohol.
Antidepressant medications	Help to decrease depression or feeling "down"	Remeron	Tiredness, hunger, dry mouth, constipation, weight gain	Can cause confusion, so avoid activities that require attention or alertness. Do not take with alcohol. Can cause dependence.
Anti-Mania medications	Help to regulate mood	Lithium	Thirst, increased urination	Must be used with extreme caution in people taking other psychiatric medications and diuretics and with people who have seizures. Blood levels must be carefully monitored for life-threatening toxicity. Must keep a good fluid intake (2,500 ml- 3000 ml daily). Take the medication after meals with 8 ounces of water. Report signs of toxicity immediately. Signs of toxicity are: diarrhea, vomiting, shakiness, drowsiness, weakness, trouble walking.
Anti-psychotic medications	Treat psychosis	Haldol Clozaril	Severe extrapyramidal reactions and tardive dyskinesia: this is a group of symptoms, caused by damage to the brain. The symptoms mimic Parkinson's Disease. Dizziness, high heart rate, low blood pressure, constipation, drooling	Report all signs of extrapyramidal reactions and/or tardive dyskinesia to the health care provider immediately. These signs can include: rigid limb movements, shuffling with walking, facial grimacing, involuntary tongue movements and other symptoms. The prescribing practitioner should be checking for these symptoms at every health care visit. Left untreated, these symptoms can become permanent. Because Clozaril can cause a life-threatening anemia, it is critical to monitor frequent blood tests (weekly during the first year). Fever may happen during the first weeks of therapy and should be monitored for and reported to the health care provider immediately. Must report any flu-like symptoms (such as: fever, sore throat, tiredness or other signs of infection). Can cause low blood pressure: change positions slowly to avoid dizziness or "passing out".

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Other Miscellaneous medications used to treat nervous system disorders	To Treat Parkinson's Disease	Sinemet	Low blood pressure and dizziness when changing positions, dry mouth, decreased hunger and appetite, twitching, unsteady walking and tremors.	Take with food to decrease upset stomach (but avoid taking with protein rich foods). Do not chew or crush extended release pills. Can cause low blood pressure: change positions slowly to avoid dizziness or "passing out".

Disorders of the Eye and Ear

Disorders of the eye are very common. Early identification and treatment of eye problems helps to keep good eyesight. All medications that are used in the eye must be labeled as "ophthalmic" (sometimes abbreviated as "ophth". If the eye medication is not specifically labeled in this way, check with the pharmacist before putting the medication in the eye. **This is critical** because if you put something into a person's eye that is not specifically made for this reason, you could cause pain and damage to the eye and the person's vision.

Disorders of the ear can affect hearing and the sense of balance. All medications that are used in the ear must be labeled "otic". If the ear medication is not specifically labeled in this way, check with the pharmacist before you put the medication in the ear.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATONS
Meds used to treat Eye disorders	Use	Examples	Common Side Effects/Adverse Reactions	Special Considerations
Anti-infectives	Used to treat conjunctivitis also known as "pink eye"	Ilotycin eye (ophthalmic) Ointment	Blurred vision	Gently wipe away any crusting or pus with a warm, moist facecloth before applying ointment. Wear gloves and wash hands before and after applying eye ointment. Warn the person that blurred vision might happen right after the ointment is put in the eye, but it will go away in a few minutes. Conjunctivitis can be spread from one eye to the other if you are not careful to keep the crusting or pus from one eye from getting into the other eye. It can also be spread from one person to another person by sharing washcloths, not using gloves and not washing hands.
Miotics and mydriatics	Used to treat glaucoma	Pilocarpine eye (ophthalmic) Drops	Blurred vision, temporary nearsightedness, temporary stinging or discomfort, eyebrow pain	Wear gloves and wash hands before and after putting drops in.
Meds used to treat Ear disorders				
Anti-infectives	Used to treat ear infections	Chloromycetin ear (otic) drops	Ear itching or burning	Wash hands and wear gloves. Avoid touching dropper to outer ear to prevent spread of germs.
Ceruminolytics	Used to treat ear wax	Cerumenex ear (otic) drops	Ear redness or itching	Wash hands and wear gloves. Health care provider may also order gentle irrigation (rinsing) of the ear canal after giving ceruminex eardrops.
Meds used to treat inner ear or balance disorders				
	Used to treat vertigo or dizziness and unsteadiness related to inner ear problems	Antivert	Drowsiness	Can cause drowsiness and lack of concentration: avoid activities that require alertness.

The Musculoskeletal System

The musculoskeletal system is made up primarily of bones, joints and muscles.

We rely on the musculoskeletal system to work together to help us move different parts of our body.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Medications used to treat Musculoskeletal disorders				
Bisphosphonates	Used to treat Osteoporosis	Fosamax	Upset stomach, stomach ulcers	Fosamax interacts with many foods and medications. Must be taken on an empty stomach with a full (6-8 ounces) glass of water. Must wait at least 30 minutes after taking Fosamax before having any food or drinks or taking any other medications. Must be sitting up when taking the medication and cannot lie down for 30 minutes after taking the medication. Must report problems swallowing or chest pain to the health care provider immediately.
Muscle Relaxants	Used to treat muscle spasms and spasticity	Baclofen	Tiredness, dizziness, weakness, confusion, nausea, throwing up	Give with meals or with milk to prevent upset stomach. Do not stop taking this medication suddenly if it has been taken over a long period of time. Can cause tiredness and confusion, so avoid activities that require alertness.
Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory	Used to treat muscle pain, joint pain and pain caused by inflammation of muscles and ligaments.	Motrin	Upset stomach	May take 2-4 weeks to successfully treat symptoms of arthritis. Take with meals or with milk to reduce upset stomach. Should be taken cautiously along with aspirin, alcohol or steroid medications. Can cause bleeding ulcers. Avoid exposure to sunlight and use sunscreen.
COX-2 Inhibitor	Used to treat arthritis	Celebrex	Headache, upset stomach, stuffed up nose, nausea, stomach ulcers	May be taken on an empty stomach or with food. Can cause bloating and swelling which must be reported to the health care provider immediately. Should not be taken by people who have had an allergic reaction to Sulfa meds (see antibiotic section) or to aspirin products. Report any rash or signs of allergic reaction immediately.

The Endocrine System

The **endocrine system** is responsible for making hormones and for regulating growth, reproduction and overall metabolism. Many other organs and glands in the body work along with the endocrine system.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATONS
Meds used to treat endocrine disorders				
Thyroid Medications	Regulate thyroid function	Synthroid	Nervousness, trouble sleeping, tremors, fast pulse, heart "flutters", angina (heart) pains	Give at the same time every day, in the morning before breakfast to prevent trouble sleeping. Notify health care provider immediately for chest pain, sweating, shortness of breath, increased nervousness or fast pulse. Report any unusual bleeding to the health care provider. Blood tests are needed to monitor the effect of this medication.
Anti-diabetic medications	Regulate blood sugar	Glucophage	Low blood sugar	Give with meals. If only given once per day, give with morning meal. Monitor blood sugar levels as ordered by the health care provider. Must have information about diabetes including: following diet, weight reduction, exercise, personal hygiene, blood sugar monitoring and preventing infection.
		Insulin	Low blood sugar, skin soreness at injection site	Before giving insulin, a specialized training is required to make sure that you know how to monitor blood sugar levels, give a subcutaneous injection and understand the principles of treatment for persons with diabetes.
Oral Contraceptives	Prevent pregnancy, regulate menses	Ortho Novum	Headache, dizziness, nausea, menstrual bleeding or spotting, breast tenderness	Take at the same time every day, preferably at bedtime. Do not skip doses. Report any sudden weight gain to the health care provider. Risk of side effects is much greater in smokers. Signs of blood clot must be reported to the healthcare provider immediately and include: abdominal pain, numbness, stiffness or pain in legs or buttocks, shortness of breath, severe headache or vision problems. Contraceptives do not prevent sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and HIV.

The Digestive System: The **digestive system** starts at the mouth and ends at the anus and also includes the throat, the stomach and the intestines. The digestive system helps us to break down food, absorb the nutrients from the food, and dispose of the waste through bowel movements. Many different organs and systems work along with the digestive system.

CATEGORY	USE	EXAMPLES	COMMON SIDE EFFECTS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Meds used to treat digestive disorders				
Anti-diarrheal	Used to treat diarrhea	Imodium	Constipation, dry mouth	If diarrhea is not improved after taking Imodium for two days, notify the health care provider. Report nausea, vomiting or stomach pain to the health care provider immediately.
Laxatives	Used to treat constipation	Colace: makes bowel movements soft, easier to move through the digestive system	Diarrhea, cramping	Give liquid in milk or juice to decrease bitter taste. Make sure that the person is getting adequate fluids, fiber in their diet and exercise. Not used to treat constipation; colace prevents constipation. May take 1-3 days to work.
		Dulcolax Suppository: stimulates the muscles in the rectum to help push out bowel movements.	Stinging feeling in the rectum.	Unwrap suppository and push as far as possible into the rectum and up against the rectal "wall". Usually works within one hour.
		Metamucil: adds form and bulk to bowel movements, which stimulates the digestive tract to move things along.	Nausea, diarrhea or constipation	Make sure that the person is getting adequate fluids, fiber in their diet and exercise. Must mix powder with at least 8 oz of cold, pleasant tasting liquid or water and have the person drink it immediately, before it hardens up. Must keep up a good daily fluid intake. May take 24 hours to 3 days to work.
Antacids	Used to treat stomach upset, burning	Amphojel	Constipation	Shake suspension well and follow dosage with a sip of milk or water. Take after meals and do not give at the same time as other medications unless specifically instructed to. When given at the same time with other meds, amphojel can cause the other meds not to work.
Anti-reflux	Used to treat acid reflux from stomach into throat	Reglan	Restlessness, nervousness, drowsiness, tiredness, twitching, tremors	Usually taken 30 minutes before meals and at bedtime.
Anti-ulcer	Used to prevent or treat ulcers or acid reflux	Pepcid	Headache	Works best when taken at bedtime. Do not take for more than 8 weeks without checking back with the health care provider. Typically for short-term use.